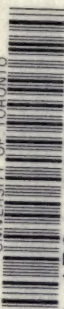


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SOME ESSAYS AND PASSAGES BY JOHN  
EGLINTON; SELECTED BY WILLIAM  
BUTLER YEATS

THE DUN EMER PRESS  
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The writer of the following pages would like to say that he has had no hand in the selection, which Mr. Yeats has done him the honour to make for the Dun Emer Press series, and in particular, that if consulted he would hardly have approved of the inclusion of the last essay, written over twelve years ago, in which a metaphor is pressed to the point of being recommended as a gospel.

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## DYING NATIONS AND REGENERATE PATRIOTISM

A difficulty like that experienced by religion in maintaining its ground at a time when the discovery of new facts has modified the significance of the facts on which it has rested, is experienced by patriotism at a time when culture and civilization are tending to merge the national feeling in the feeling of the brotherhood of man. This apparent loss of the patriotism which builds a state ; which, perhaps, in the union of a few farmers to resist oppression, has found a soil in which new possibilities have unfolded for mankind, is one of those irreparable natural facts, like death, or the mingling of a stream with the sea, against which our philosophy is tasked to discover what solace it may, or to what new factor the displacement of the old is due. No doubt it is the most imposing production of time, a nation lying at its point of maturity, an organic whole, with refined social circles, noble and altruistic rulers, iron-willed soldiers and sailors, grave merchants, a prosperous populace, inventors, poets, philosophers (alas !), all inequalities compensated in the unifying sense of nationality — ‘the while that other so majestic self stands by.’ And yet nations have to die as well as individuals ; and a wise sociology, like a wise philosophy, must needs look death in the face. It is one of those facts which show

that the attitude of man throughout history is in most respects passive, and that it is chiefly his part to behold and acquiesce in God's processes. In the fifteenth century the Protestants make a bold dash on the stronghold of sacerdotal arrogance and carry off the Bible; and now, thinks Protestantism, God shall get his due, and we shall proceed in the construction of civilization with that matter settled! But a little while later this ark of the covenant, though well watched & guarded, has lost its power to strike dead the impious Uzzahs who would lay a profane hand upon it, even to defend it, and Protestantism has quietly to abandon the prerogative. Next comes science, which annexes the moral idea; but things now move so rapidly, and we are so well taught, that already we prepare to adapt ourselves to fresh eventualities. And as it is with the history of the human soul, so with that which is part of it, the history of society: and patriotism, like religion, has at length to cast about for its sanction and its object. Why, if my country's enemies have hanged my grandfather, and subjected one of my great-aunts, the flower of my family, to a series of studied insults, which it was her solace in dying to think that her brother's descendants should avenge; why should I hate my hereditary foemen if haply I number among them the saviour of my soul? It may even



be my conviction that the tradition represented by that country against which the example of an unmatched line of patriots exhorts me to take up arms, should submerge the tradition which my own country carries onward through time like a load of hereditary incumbrances. It fares, therefore, with traditional patriotism as it fares with the traditional faiths, which build about themselves the walls of negation, walls which may serve one generation against its old age, by a less possibility the next generation, and by one still more remote our children's children. What then is the affirmative principle of patriotism, seeing that it is not that which brings one patriotism into conflict with others? Is it the right to say, 'This is my own, my native land?' But it is not mine at all: it has come to belong to a small number of the sons and daughters of privilege, amid whose fair campaigns and river-borders I should perhaps be glad to call some nook of land my own. Is it the common inheritance of historical memories? And yet the past history of our country, any more than the past history of ourselves individually, is not necessarily something to be proud of; and as for its battlefields, all the battles that were ever fought in history, and resulted in victory to the rights of man, were fought on the same side. In any case, indeed, it is the part of a philosopher to accept

the past, and to make the best of the best that it has left him. Again, is it an ineradicable instinct like filial affection, of which the grounds are in our human composition? Yet if the indifference of the child be but the result of parental indifference, it is the less undutiful, and in the case of patriotism, is obligation to rest altogether on one side?

It must be owned that popular patriotism submits with no better grace than popular religion to the criticism of philosophy: and yet the criticism of philosophy differs from all other criticism in this, that it is a search for reality, so that wherever philosophical criticism applies itself, we may assume that it is the belief of philosophy that a reality lies hidden. And is not patriotism concerned that its reality should be discovered? Nay, let this be true, though every patriot a liar! Philosophical criticism would make patriotism not a mere traditional and historical legacy received on trust from generation to generation, and gathering continually a fresh increment of liabilities, but a fact in the life of each man; varying in each country as its flora varies, while yet in all lands flowers turn to the same sun & are watered by the same rains. The law of patriotism is therefore to be sought in the annals of mankind rather than in the traditional patriotism of one's own country: and these afford many glorious



examples of men who suffered as martyrs or grew old as the fathers of their country. For it is by spiritual laws and not alone by brute natural laws that nations as well as men grow to maturity, and that which directs and controls their growth is not left entirely to the natural law, but to the courage and will of men themselves, some of whom, when they have seen the principles of justice menaced by external or internal violence, have preferred or risked death to seeing the fair experiment of nationality frustrated. So far the traditional patriotism finds its spiritual sanction. While the growth of a great nation is going forward, great men have found full scope for their activities in serving it, and great poets in uttering its voice. Yet there comes a time when this 'other so majestic self' is perceived to have withdrawn, its history is written, and it is inquired not only what is the duty of the citizen, but what is the function of nationality. The individual, grown wiser than his institutions, regards them with a critical and comparing eye. And when the poet sees his hope menaced, derided, denied; when what is to him the only reality is contemptuously allowed him as the working hypothesis of his poetry, for which if he secure a pittance he is regarded as a clever fellow; & when, if he would consent to praise institutions, he must adopt the vulgar estimate



of 'poetic truth' — shall he be more zealous in defence of his country than of his ideal? No; he will take civilization at its word. If it can do so well without him, let it do so!

'When each man gets his due,' says an angry poet, 'the nation dies!' and his despairing conclusion is that most men should therefore be satisfied with less. But it is not a matter of choice; the nation dies when it has discharged its function, dies, if it has been a good nation, beautifully and composedly, like an aged mother. That purpose is, to bring the individual into communion, in the first place with his fellow-citizens, and then with the whole brotherhood of men: to enrich the life of each with the life of all; to form, fashion, educate, and finally to liberate, an individual. As a member of society the individual identifies himself with its interests, feels the shocks which try it, grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength; yet the nation is only so far a spiritual entity as it receives this from the individuals who compose it. The man grows, the nation dies; the world grows young, society withers. It may be creditable to the good heart of man, but hardly so to his good sense, that he does not acquiesce cheerily in his own progress, but that the birth of individuality is celebrated, not only with flowers and hymns, but with revolutionary anger

and tears of blood. What is the reason? It is the war of Zeus with Kronos, of the individual with society. The former is young, irresponsible, stepping gaily into new worlds; the latter reproachful and jealous, devouring its children. On the one hand we have the naughty freedom of Rousseau, the second childhood of poetry in Wordsworth; on the other, angry reactionists like Burke and De Maisrte. Between the two how does patriotism fare? Which yields to the other in love of country? The one sees it in the light of past memories, the other in the light of hope and enchantment. If the one is too reckless of the value of precedent and tradition, the other is unduly incredulous of what the future may bring forth. Thus each nationality, having come bravely down through time united in self-defence against the world, is at length divided against itself, the old against the young, the rich against the poor, tradition against initiative. The old retain the nomenclature and mechanism of nationality, but the real nation is where its soul is, and the soul of a nation is the men in it who have attained unto themselves. Wherever a man has found himself, the purpose of nationality is fulfilled in him. The whole political mechanism has him in view.

Patriotism, in fact, in the old sense, is only possible when the whole life-interest of the individual is

comprised within that of the patria. When individuality is hatched, and has become independent of the parent community, the relation of the individual to it must suffer a change. Instead of a receiver he becomes a giver. Of course, he still owes his patria fire and water, in return for which he should do his business with integrity, give his vote honestly, respect the altars, etc.; but the gifts of the spirit are no longer from his country to him but from him to his country; and though the necessity of dying for his country is not reduced in the same way as is the occasion for it, he will far oftener be called upon to defend his ideals from the insidious disparagement of his friends and fellow-countrymen, and may even in rare instances have to accept at their hands, with what assurance he can command, a cup of hemlock. Then indeed patriotism is brought to the test, when the whole honour of a community in the face of time devolves on the moral initiative of the individual, and doubtless it is such men who confer upon the patria, for the most part against its will, its true glory.

This higher or regenerate patriotism, which has its ground in the relation of man to his fellow men and to nature, rather than in his political relation to the state, may appear to some chimerical, yet in the light of only one fact which may be mentioned, it



is the traditional patriotism which may begin to appear illusory. For it is this new relation to nature which has found its poet, and which is pre-eminently the theme of modern poetry. It is in Wordsworth that love of country is once again blended, as traditional patriotism traditionally is, with religion. Say what we will, this new relation to nature is the very atmosphere and medium of all that is best in modern thought; and while we moderns have this, though we must maintain a guilty silence when plied with searching questions as to several articles of our political and ethical creed, we have a great structural fact on our side. Well lost are all our creeds and catchwords if time restore us the poet drawing his lessons from nature, and breathing his spirit among men. Those lines, a stumbling block to the learned:

‘One impulse from a vernal wood  
Will tell you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can,’

simply enunciate the indefeasible right of the modern man to confide in his own intuitions as men in other ages have confided in theirs. For the modern man does not regard himself, like the Stoic or Epicurean, as the puppet of destiny, nor altogether as a

malefactor, like the early Christian, nor quite as the victim of an illusion, like the Hindu: a thousand filaments of realized relation and sympathy connect him with this nature which he surveys and uses, and his soul with the soul of the universe. He may be lost, as the mediævalists tell us, but the recurring Spring moves him to artless hymns, and a purified imagination exalts him, at least temporarily, above the life of the passions. His thought has come forth from the study and the cloister, to wax and bloom in the open air, where nature's self takes it into her keeping and instructs him, perhaps as never before, in her ways and processes, granting him space for his utmost speculations and promise for his fairest dream. 'I did not know,' says Whitman, 'that I contained so much virtue!' He did not know, that is to say, that there was a co-operation throughout the universe with what was best in him, and that there was no need to resume the slough of his sins and hide in unsunned places from the wrath of God. He did not know that his virtue was a fact in the universe. 'Two things fill me with awe,' says Kant, 'the stars above me and the moral law within me.' Nature at last throws aside her veil and shows him authentic beauty, holiness, and wisdom; he views in his turn everything that God has made, and behold, it is very good. It may be at the expense of some of his natural

force that he no longer lives within the solid walls of his fleshly personality, like Plutarch's heroes, but loses himself through the telescope or the microscope or in the lore of other days, and has been known to shed tears over snowdrops or the notes of the nightingale. He is at once so much less and so much more than he used to be; so much less as a limited personality, or in rivalry with the heroic selfishness of Cæsar and Alexander, yet so much more in proportion as the universe has augmented and supplemented his powers with its secrets and properties. He is no longer bounded by the power of his arm or the might of his brain, but by his sympathies is liberated and purified. It is a notable change this, by which nature is no longer hostile to us, and so far as we understand it is no Maya or illusion, but is an extension of ourselves, our guide, support, teacher, champion, and friend without end. 'Rightly read,' asks Thoreau, 'is not nature that of which she is commonly supposed to be the symbol merely?' The modern poet, who is vowed to the interpretation of nature as well as to the untrammelled expression of human nature, sees in his native land a portion of nature, and as love of the neighbour is not diminished but increased in love of mankind, so love of the patria is not lost but found in the love of nature. Shall not this soil be the seat of the fairest ideal yet known



to man? It is not for nothing that we were born in a particular star, not for nothing that we were born in a particular country, and, by Heaven and Earth! our boughs shall spread and our roots sink in it! 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home'! When we are true patriots we shall love our country less for any of its memories or battlefields or legends than simply because it is under our feet; because it is our bit of the earth's crust, the piece of soil from which we see the stars, the place of our experience and scene of our experiment, the firm ground on which we can bring to the test the philosophies, religions, politics, literatures of the world: where we have plenty of room to fail in and to succeed. Your compatriots may be dissatisfied with your patriotism if you absent yourself from their commemorations, and are imperfectly versed in the tale of your country's wrongs: still, you may rejoice in a true relation to your patria if you have good inspirations in your rustic walk. Perhaps your patria, if she would speak, would not refuse you even the glorious civic title, seeing that you can find something in her as she is, & are not for ever setting her aside with schemes of improvement. It is, perhaps, to you that she will send the genius of her secret places, the spirit of her floods, mountains, and promontories, an awful presence, unsuspected by most pluckers of the shamrock,

to touch your lips with an aboriginal utterance: mother nature herself, indeed, manifesting herself as the tutelary spirit of his native soil to some favoured being, who is thereby gifted to add some words to the sum of human utterance.

No doubt it is more than a sentimental illusion that the land in which we have come into being, and been brought through society into communion with the thought and history of the world, demands our love and protection as a mother-country. In the ideal republic of Plato the child did not know his mother, and so his breast was freed from all disturbing affections and sympathies, and his heart set full on knowledge. Of all the mothers whom he saw and knew, one might be his, and so, it may be, his interest in all was elevated and sustained. And so, in an ideal condition of things, it is possible that wherever we travelled we should feel as though in our mother-country, while the politics and internal troubles of each country were ignored, as in polite conversation the facts of digestion. As it is, however, our actual mother-country is known to us, claiming querulously our errant affections, and no longer like a stately matron sending forth her sons to heroic wars and bidding them return with their shield or upon it. Pity instead of pride inspires the songs of the poet at this spectacle, and two laws war in his

soul, the law of the social affections and the law of individual freedom, so that it seems he must choose one while yet neither without the other is worth the choice. A thing unmeet to betide a poet: to be compelled to choose ! And yet that necessity comes to the poet as to all, and upon his choice much depends beside his own happiness: the true happiness of the mother-country in great part depends upon it: whether she shall grow old without hope, with her pains and maladies increasing upon her, or renew her youth in the imperishable springs of spiritual knowledge. Knowing therefore this far better than the mother-country, he will take courage, and firmly and deliberately choose individual freedom, meanwhile adopting towards his country a tone against which she may exclaim as unfilial, but in which she will presently acquiesce with grateful pride. 'No, no !' he will say, 'my patria ! I will persist in seeing thee a virgin mother, made of the nearest thing to God that we know, the magnetic and teeming soil, and will still behold thee beautiful and unprofaned, no palsied beldam with whiskey on thy breath and a crucifix in thy hand, two things I never loved ! The growth of the body is toward age and corruption; but the growth of the soul is toward youth and immortality; and having become conscious of thine own soul by means of the songs of high-minded



poets and the doctrines of serene philosophers, thou shalt prepare to meet death, raising a grateful pæan to the gods, who have given thee strong and upright sons to cherish thee and quicken thy spirit ! Parent and nurse of men, raised up by God to take thy part in the conduct of the human destiny, thou shalt not lack honour from me, from thy birth in a past how distant ! down through thine heroic youth, of which thou hast many tales to tell, to times more recent when thy fortunes were altered and thy faults found thee, and thou wast constrained to mate with an unloved stranger, and to bring forth sons in affliction ! He and thou art old now ; yet it is doubtful which is in the fairer case, he with his cares which crowd meditation from his soul, or thou that mayst abide in resignation. Wherefore take courage ! Make clear your spirit ! Be of good cheer ! Look forward and not back, or backward only for some shining lesson or example ! And so at last look to die, being full of wisdom as of days !'

## CONCERNING HEROIC POETRY AND HEROIC MAN

In the heroic literature of ancient Ireland, as in all the ancient literatures, a man is put forward, armed with a weapon (his proficiency with which is understood and frequently emphasised), his relation to

men being that of their prototype, his relation to the universe that of its protagonist: the meaning of the universe, its thunders, its motions, its potencies, is centred for the time in him and his toils, the sun-god deserting his chariot to assist him, sea-shapes rising to console him; as it is told of Finn & his companions, 'every step they made was heard through the firmament.' At the present time man is dwarfed by his own achievements. It is not the abysses of time and space, the upper and lower infinities, which reduce him to significance; in these he exults, dilates, and lives: it is his own music which fills him with melancholy yearnings, his own philosophies which unsettle him with doubts, his own sciences which taunt him with the limitations of his understanding, his own luxuries which dissatisfy him with a normal condition. As Browning says, 'Tis looking downwards makes us dizzy.' Set a man anywhere under the sun and he will adorn any landscape, and at night the empyrean will light his face; but in the midst of his own ingenious contrivances, in a library, or as a social unit in one of his large towns, he does look small. There was nevertheless a time, called the heroic period, when these sciences, arts, inventions, which have proceeded from him, were latent within him, and when he himself, a great, sombre fellow shouting his pedigree at you when he spoke to you,

knew all that he owned, and clearly marked the frontiers outside which he owed homage to the invisible powers. Or, perhaps, his troubles began as early as in that sleep spoken of in Genesis, in which virtue went out of him, and waking he beheld by his side a smiling shape, the first of many such sleeps, in which one by one all the joys and virtues once implicit in his bosom took shape outside of him to tempt and madden him with the fallacy of owning what he rightly was; till at last he rolls bankrupt on the ground, a shell, his power gone from him, civilization like a robe whirled down the stream out of his reach, in eddies of London and Paris, the truth no longer the ichor of his being but a cloudy, evaporated mass of problems over his head: this is he, homo sapiens, poor, naked, neurotic, undeceived, ribless wretch: make what you can of him, ye bards!

## **PHILOSOPHY, POETRY, FAITH AND THE WORLD**

The grand ideas of science are the most generally available: evolution, gravitation, circulation of the blood, conservation of matter, ethereal undulation, etc., etc.; and when, in return for its material services, a grateful civilization has set it apart as a highly salaried official, it may regret the time when it could muse under apple trees, or slip unnoticed into



the cathedral of Santa Croce, or recline in the public baths, or sit by the kitchen fire, without a care. In like manner, philosophy soon becomes choked in its own phraseology: it is the function of philosophy to launch a generalization from time to time into human consciousness. The truths of the laboratory and the lecture room may acquire in this way some admixture of impurity, but to become forces they must enlist universal sympathies, as an idea, to become effective in a man, must enlist his passions. Literature, again, whose highest achievement is simplicity, when it has performed its part in making a nation conscious of itself, claims an independent basis: and its present aspiration in the European capitals to live for 'art's sake' is like nothing so much as the declaration of a beauty past her prime that she will have nothing more to do with men. No, we ourselves, with our aspirations, our reveries, our inward struggles, are the centre from which radiate all the paths of speculation: but if, committing ourselves to any one of them, we advance too far in it, we shall only emerge in a desert where the track is lost. Every man embodies in his own experience a fact which no omniscience can comprehend. The whole of knowledge is brought ever and again to the test of how much is applicable to the case of a single person. Man is still the measure of all things, and the measure of the science and learning of our time is the

individuality which they foster. Are faith, hope and love enriched? What of poetry, meditation, and action?

Meanwhile, there is nothing surely to disquiet us in the position at which we are arrived, of direct commerce with the fact, no theory, no delusion any longer interposed or enforced. A certain unreality may have seemed to touch everything on which we leaned: scholarship, devotion, holiness, we see these things all round now, as isolated facts, not as doors into the heart of things. Our navigators have brought us word that the continents on which we supposed ourselves to dwell are only adjacent islands. But doubtless it is to this soil of the present, stripped though it be of old associations, that the seed of the future is committed; and the faith we need is less the faith which the amiable ecclesiastics of England would provide by pouring the new wine of modern thought into old bottles, than a faith in ourselves, a faith responsive to the influences which rain upon us, a faith like that of the returning birds or reviving herbage of Spring: a faith, vital not historical, in which we must invite the poets to confirm us, inspiring us without intermission to the realization of our ideals. The clergy have much to say about faith in God and nothing at all about faith in man: of him they conceive as one who has planted

all the tares and none of the wheat; and as, according to them, all the items in the bills of mankind are on the debit side, and none on the credit, he naturally loses interest in his accounts. And yet, if man is immortal, as the churches assert, and God exists, it should not seem so very incredible that the ideal is more real than the actual, and that poetry, genius, and intuition are true, holy, and universal. People talk of a regenerated world, of leaving the world better than they found it, and so on, and pending this regeneration find in the existence of the world as it is a necessity and excuse for remaining much as they are. But the world will never be regenerated while it is the world. All the roads to perfection set out from the world; and it is hard enough to struggle toward perfection with a pilgrim's wallet and staff, without bringing the world with us. The world will be on the way to perfection when all its inhabitants are on the road. 'How shall the world be served?' asks the philanthropist: but Christ went deeper when he refused all service to the world and all parley with it. 'Jesus Christ,' says Leopardi, 'was the first who distinctly denounced to men that extoller and enjoiner of all the false virtues; that detractor and persecutor of all the true ones; that opponent of all essential greatness which can become a man; that derider of every lofty sentiment, unless it be



spurious, and of every sweet emotion, unless it be false; that slave of the strong and tyrant of the weak; that hater of the unhappy — by Christ called the world — a name which has stuck to it in every civilized tongue to this day.' And in spite of reformation and revolution, liberty, education, sanitation, and what not, the world, as such, is as much the foe of the inward or true life as in the days when Christ hurled against it his terrific sentences. That for the last two or three centuries it has taken to asking people to dinner whom it formerly burned and persecuted (for it was never the church that persecuted, but the world), is perhaps not an unmixed advantage to the philosopher, as the issues of life and death are less clear than formerly, and the valiant youth hardly cares about setting forth when the ways are not beset with dragons and robbers. The world has great ends in view, no doubt, interoceanic canals, transcontinental railways, it may be interplanetary communication; but science, the good Titan, after unheard-of feats, will find in the end that it has served in the world a mistress whose purpose was flippant, and that its true aim was appreciated by unsuspected and solitary on-lookers. But what then is the world? By the world we mean living from without inward instead of from within outward. The two tendencies may be interdependent and mutually necessary, as

an Hegelian might contend, but they are opposed continually as Christ and Anti-Christ, and now-a-days, when the burden of our higher poetry is that 'the world is too much with us,' there can be little doubt on which side the tide is lowest. Besides, what is to become of the balance if every idealist is not the sworn foe of the world? In face of the world's smiling tolerance, lively movements are originated and masquerade in some antique or novel garb, and on occasion of each new heresy the world sends one of its representatives to be converted, and to hail the new prophet to dinner. Of course the new heresy may then boast of the conquest of the world. But when the least of men hearkens to the oracle within himself the world is met in the only way possible, and all question of the merits and defects of our own age compared with the wisdom and heroism of times past or future becomes impertinent. 'Whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practised by others. The world follows whatever example they lead.' All are needful, society and the individual, the world and the gospel, Christ and Anti-Christ, but the protagonists of humanity are those who follow an inward conviction, and true progress is to be estimated by every step so taken.

## HURRY AND QUIET, THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE

Progress is evident: yet who is able to distinguish true progress from that hurry-scurry and jostling competition of self-interest which religion declares illusory? No study of history unfolds the law whose calm operations we might contemplate. Outside of the street, we think with relief of the central sea, or the calmness of the geologic periods, which perhaps like the tortoise will come up with the hare of civilization when it has wearied itself out and lain down to sleep. And not only from the turmoil of human life do we turn with relief to nature, but to the habits and ways of man's humbler companions on the planet: these have their haunts, their customs, of which they are never tired. The swallow does not ask the cuckoo, 'Where are you going for the summer?' nor the wren gossip of the brilliant marriage of the bull-finch. We know when the bear has retired for his winter sleep, and when the shoals of herring and mackerel come up from the sea, and we are able to profit by their wise and stately punctuality. But we men have no time to be young and time to be old, no pairing season, no alternation of action and meditation. If our civilization could develop some such habit as the Indian of retiring at the approach of old age to solitude, or if, with the certainty



with which a Chinaman or a Malay can with a little opium erase from his mind all the records of care, we could enter the state of meditation, and remain therein for a season, we might then seem to excel the lower animals in lofty endowment as much as we excel them in cunning.

### **EDUCATION AND WISDOM**

What misgives any sincere-minded man in too much talk about beauty, truth, art, God, and so on, but an instinctive sense that to consider such things too much as facts outside experience is the beginning of formalism, incredulity, vulgarity, and of all that riff-raff which encumbers the paradise of a true life? In a highly civilized period wisdom, or the fully awakened human consciousness, is resolved like light through a prism into its constituents, so that in whatsoever place a man labours the full-blended beam does not light his task, but this one sees nothing but physical fact, another only metaphysical truth, another utilitarian, another æsthetic, and so forth, and it is hard to find a spot exempt from these variegated effects, or at last to trust one's own eyesight. And as pigments answering to the seven rays may be compounded into a semblance or counterpart of white light, so university education mixes the seven sciences into a semblance of wisdom called

culture, prints B. A. on the young man's forehead, and is justified of her child by his measure of worldly success.

## THE POET AND THE PHILOSOPHER

The poetic gift is a variety of the philosophical, a consideration which throws some light on the history of poets. The poet praises beauty, strength, joy, intoxication, courage, riches, rank, magnificence; why then is there not a universal instinct among men to crown and foster this being who is the voice of their souls, and why is it left altogether to himself to make his happiness? Why were the greatest poets most wretched, and the happiest those who looked least to the world for their happiness? Life being lived from within outward draws its renewal from within, and the great poet sinks a well of such renewal to satisfy his own thirst: but what credentials can he offer for his ingenuous self-revelation in a world whose life is all on the outside? With the best intentions, the world can hardly be expected to do him justice. Moreover, as the philosopher seeks to reduce the shows of the universe to a meaning, so the poet values them as they supply him with a word; seeing which in the man the world is cold to his real coldness, though it accepts the homage of his art. He stands midway between the world and wisdom, a pillar of fire to the world, a

pillar of cloud to the philosopher. He hopes to achieve the synthesis of enjoyment and enlightenment. But though his face is turned to the world, it is from behind, from philosophy, that the voices he hears come: it is in truth, in vision, in reality that he must find peace. Poets are the infancy of the coming race; philosophers are the age of the race that is passing. Philosophers are confirmed in experience; poets are inspired by hope. The philosopher has once been a poet: the poet, after many vexations and disillusionments, will one day be a philosopher. Philosophy consorts with poetry as age is thrown with youth, while the world is absent all day on its affairs, and it is this old friend whom the poet plies with his artless questions. Poetry is a never-ceasing wonder and interest to philosophy, which sees itself young again in poetry and eager to take possession of the world, and it is more at home with this child than with the grown-up world which neglects it. Philosophy speaks with best authority on poetry, and one of the chief bequests of philosophy is a criticism of poetry.

### **A MORNING KNOWLEDGE**

As it is said, the knowledge of God is a morning knowledge, *matutina cognitio*; the knowledge of man is an evening knowledge, *vespertina cognitio*. To-morrow, for us, the sun will elicit new songs.



## NOTHING IS PERFECT BUT FOR A MOMENT

Civilization has in its start and growth the natural and inevitable beauty of a plant, or a girl; but when its charms are going and it has to maintain its bloom and contours with rouge and heaven knows what, the Rousseaus and Tolstois break away from it saying coarse things. In the time of Chaucer the English nation is as fair as a rosebud, and its poets babble of spring: but a couple of centuries later, when Queen Elizabeth was pondering whether she could not in some way restrain London's further growth, its expanded petals were falling away in a shower of dramas & epics. 'Nothing is perfect,' as the French financier Necker observed, 'except for a moment.' A city is nature's doing, and London her hugest flower by the river's brim, but primroses are preferable when London begins to run to seed. Nothing could possibly restrain communities from coagulating into cities, where comfort will in time engender delight, delight thought, thought discontent and disintegration. To call civilization a failure will not help us very much. Of course it is a failure: not, however, because it is a scheme erected by man in the teeth of nature, but because nature is no longer in it as a coherent whole. She subsists nevertheless, and with concentrated energy, in the individual,

who drops away and rolls off by himself to the wood or the seashore with a swelling potentiality of thought in his bosom.

## **A CITY IN YOUTH AND IN OLD AGE**

Civilization ceases to be a good thing with the belief in God, as the Neckers and Gladstones know. When men are growing up in a community they recognize the tendencies on which they are advancing, and to deviate from these tendencies, to refuse homage to Aphrodite or Apollo, seems an impious and fatal folly. When men have already grown, however, these tendencies are no longer manifest or efficient in their lives, and some teacher starts up with the announcement that all this time the Kingdom of God has been germinating within them; a joyous discovery to as many as receive it. The conceptions of single men become then as great as the race traditions. No one who has grasped the conception that the part repeats the whole will assent to the permanent subordination of the individual to an outward institution.

The test of the state of civilization is therefore quite simple: whether in assisting it the individual is astride of his proper instincts. If in gratifying his deepest and truest inclinations he is subserving the general end, then of that civilization it may be said

that it is growing and prospering, and that Nature is in it. When, on the other hand, a man does some violence to his own nature in adhering to the parent bulk; when its character and aspirations are not repeated in him; when his duty to himself runs counter to his outward obligations; when the component parts of the State, its institutions, must have mainstays passed round them to hold them together; when the family is no longer the State in miniature, and woman demurs to what is expected of her; when the populace breaks over its natural barriers; when the faculty of building ceases; when the Ideal and the Practical seem mutually antagonistic, and the youth must crush his genius into his cleverness if he will succeed as a citizen; then of that State it may be said that its day, as a State, is over; that nature is no longer in it; and that endless disintegration is its portion. Look at some youthful city compactly built together, rising abrupt on the plains of which she is mistress; I mean no Utopia nor ideal republic, but simply a young barbaric town that one may fancy. From the engirdling walls to the threatening citadel every hearth is kindled: there is noise of cutting and chopping & grinding, a bee-like susurrations of homogeneous employment; the sun-lit smoke is the city's breath, drawn freely from lungs nowhere decrepit. The



young men exercise in the fields, the old men sit in council, and at sunset the daughters leap down the street to the dance. Look upon that picture, then upon this. No foe from without has availed to burst the walls of that town, but excess of life, sun-nurtured, has broken them from within. The city has overthrown its boundaries and poured out upon the plain, its outlines are gone, it is formless. Ask these people where they live, and they will give you the name of that ancient city. But they no longer live there: they are a stationary horde. Why not begin to move away? 'Ah,' say many who would not consciously acknowledge themselves slaves to their fellow-men, 'London is a great tyrant!' There it is! Yet does it not occur to these myriads that the thing which they serve is a figment: that London is— Londoners?

### WORDSWORTH AND CITY LIFE

I will think once again, as I thought often in my misery, of that raw North-country youth, who, a century ago, seeking like myself to catch on as a citizen, walked up and down in London; its multitudinous houses taking a certain splendour at that time in the ruddy sunsets of the French Revolution era. A completely mild and innocuous thing it seemed, that strange rapture to which this young

man was liable in his walks: and the quick-eyed citizens of London doubtless glanced, after the manner which still obtains with them, at his hat & boots, rapidly deducing how much there might be to be reckoned with between these extremities from the condition in which they, the outworks of the personality, were kept. And could their sharp eyes have pierced to his mind they would have found for the most part the healthful vacuity of a mind at ease, traversed ever and anon by tender breeze-like memories and imaginations of a happy childhood spent amid the distant mountains. Here, the most irrelevant figure in Cheapside, he hears the song of a captive thrush at the corner of Wood Street, and forthwith these imaginations that attend him throng upon him:

‘Bright volumes of vapour thro’ Lothbury glide,  
And a river runs on thro’ the Vale of Cheapside!’

Seize him, ye Londoners! It is a treachery! He is no Gallic emissary, but worse! He is in league with the green hosts of trees, whose patient barbaric siege ye have put back so long from year to year, and of the countless horde of grass that springs in the breaches of ruins & in the interstices of depopulate pavements! He has been reared among them, and he

has not forgotten the friends of his youth. They have crooned him into infant sleep with their murmurings, bewitching him. And now he is glamour'd and sees not the hurrying people who jostle him; he exults no longer in citizenship, & the flush of patriotism is withered within him: he exults in the green light beneath trees, or in blue glimpses of woodland water. Already he sees, or thinks he sees, his hermitage by the lakeshore. Yet the young man is able-bodied enough, with no physical defects such as in Sparta would have decided the magistrates to expose him as soon as born: and but for that primal glimpse of Nature *Einosiphyllos*, tremulous with leaves, which has unsettled him, there might be the makings of a bishop in him, as there were in his brother, or, who knows? of a Lord Chancellor. It is just this indeed which makes his defection so significant as it must be regarded, that a latent Lord Chancellor, or bishop, or other eminent citizen, should thus go off by himself, maundering as it seemed, about sunsets and wayside flowers, otherwise than in a temperate postoral style. Certainly, London is no place for the indulgence of such moods; as the London reviewer said a little later: 'Notions like those of Mr. Wordsworth are evidently suited only to a life purely contemplative.' And after he was already gone a good while, far from



Cheapside and the corner of Wood Street, and London was publishing, for a consideration, his — ‘call you ’em stanzos, shepherd?’ and the clever reviewer already quoted was instituting a comparison between him & Rousseau, of whom he was indeed the more quiet though perhaps no less effective English counterpart, that became a little more apparent which we have been hinting at, that his mood was catching, and that the old charge brought against the idealist Socrates of corrupting the youths, in the sense of indisposing them for civic action, might have been made good against this man. For many young men who might have otherwise served the State well, have been unsettled & perverted through that initial treachery of Wordsworth. Benjamin Franklins and Dick Whittingtons are not reared on such stuff as ‘Tintern Abbeys’ and ‘Odes on Immortality’ are made of. Nay, we will not emphasize unnecessarily the individuality of Wordsworth: if it had not been he no doubt it would have been another, and he himself had acted quite innocently in the matter; but that Wordsworthian rapture, with all the mystic elements it held in solution, has since permeated all idealism. No genuine child of light but is liable now to sudden visitations from the wilderness; fallings from him, vanishings, illuminative misgivings, and the skirts of transcendent hopes.

And once the wilderness has breathed upon him, it claims him more and more for itself. If he plead duty, the wisdom with which he is in new communion smiles: and he recognizes with a kind of exultation, like some nymph singled out of old by the eye of Heaven, that he must yield in the end. More and more the dull round of civic duties irks him, and his soul must spring forth in the end to that which woos it to its own fulfilment. Meanwhile, has not the face of London itself suffered a change since that tall North-country youth walked its streets, the first of them that are idle, and the hot young poets who followed in his footsteps? Has it not suffered green invasions of the passive trees in many a broad place where they wave, as though London were their Carthage against which they had sworn that it must be destroyed: *Delendum est Londinium*? Does not the noisy inundation of the surrounding country on bank-holidays indicate some yeasty ingredient of London life? Has not the civil war between Labour and Capital been embittered in a sense more acute of what civic poverty misses in life? Is not street-music a wailfuller cry? Are not, in one word, the cheerful times of Dick Whittington gone forever?

## THE CHOSEN PEOPLE AT WORK

Civilized man is once more a savage: but he is not as if civilization had never been. He is no longer what he was when the failure within him of his ruder instincts left him social and stationary. He has now left his barbaric ennui behind him, and with a full heart turns once more to nature, his home and his mother. He can once again pitch his tent where he will and acknowledge no bonds. He is as one who goes forth into the morning woods, in whose brain yet flaunt the pomps and processions of his dreams. At every step he is delighted, and at every breath invigorated. He finds the forest deserted by his old foes, and the long grass free from snakes. His own appetite is not so robust and predatory as formerly. Nature no longer tempts and disciplines him, but is quite old and submissive to her grown child. He carries no more a javelin or a bag of bullets. His desires are few, and he has no longer any quarrel. He is at peace with nature, with his brethren, and with himself. 'His mind to him a kingdom is.'

He is no longer a barbarian. Those hands, folded now demurely as he passes on into the woods, a sun-flecked shadow, have never rested throughout that long dream from which he is awakened. They have reared him pyramids, temples, and cathedrals. Then



he abstracted from nature her colours, and contrived himself a world with no grosser admixture. Finally with words he built up a world, in which form & colour were repeated as in a lake the mountains around it. Form, colour, and substance of the world he has now by heart, and his hands are folded while he meditates. The world is covered with the wrecks of his dream. The pyramid lies half sunken in the sands; the temple turns yellow on capes of Greece; the cathedral is a grey presence above the trampling and trundling of the town; within, pictures glow from the roof. Poetry alone, the final art, survives fragmentarily in the slow settling of his mind to contemplation.

The desire of the wilderness, which, at the period of the French Revolution, welled up in the mind of the Wordsworthian poets and disturbed them with joy, and which has remained the uncloying theme of all poets, meant something more than an innocent love of wild flowers and clear mountain air. That is something more than an imaginative yearning with which the child of modern civilization follows with his eye the flight of the sea-bird, or breaks into utterance in the woodland. Wordsworth's song was the still small voice heard out of the tumult of that era. Simultaneously with all true individual development recurs the passion for nature and for the freedom of solitude. What did nature mean by these

promptings but that the chosen people should obey her voice and go forth into the wilderness? And however soft and persuasive her voice, yet will nature be obeyed: and disobedience entails so much trouble. For why is it better, at each climax of civilization, that the chosen people should be gone? Because, while remaining in a system of things in which they have no longer any real concern, they are an anomaly in nature: for once man is glamourised with the thought of the wilderness he becomes indifferent. He is no longer a good citizen, and he infects with his indifference those who should be so. What has he to do with the State who cares nothing what laws are promulgated, what party is triumphant, what nation is shamed? The love of his country is merged in the love of the life-giving sod. His ideas, which concern himself alone, are taken and applied prematurely and generally. What means this precocious discontent with institutions, sacred and profane, but a loose idealism caught from the reckless talk of the Chosen People: so to name that curiously situated class of Idealists, who, as Israel took over the brick-manufacture of Egypt, have in this century been taking over the manufacture of literature, and through it been directing politics and a society in which they have no longer any natural concern. Had those natural promptings, above

described, been followed by the apparition of some modern equivalent to Moses and Aaron, and the peaceable withdrawal of idealists into the wilderness, there would have been no oppression in store for them and no uneasy dreams for the Pharaoh of civilization. The French Revolution was only the first of the great plagues.

Let us consider for a moment where we stand. A great literary period such as the nineteenth century opens with a joyous outburst of song, individual life rising buoyant on the wave of national life, and a few glad voices cresting with utterance the secular movement. Such voices were Goethe and Schiller in Germany; Wordsworth, Shelley, and others, in England. A studious lull ensues, and then comes a period of a more varied and ampler utterance, distinguished not alone by that early enthusiasm, but enriched and enlarged through the ensuing interval of general culture: this is the period of art and criticism, still upborne on the flowing tide of national life; in the Victorian era it has been the period of the idyll, the essay, the novel. At present we see that taking place which has taken place at the close of all similar epochs — the Periclean, the Augustan. The tide of national life sets to ebb, and the general impulse of development subsiding with it, idealists inevitably divide into two classes, those who content



themselves with maintaining a decadent literature, art, and science, and those who feel prompted to perpetuate the onward impulse in their own individual lives. If in the previous epoch individual life finds ample scope in culture, observation, and production, it now casts about to discover and further in itself a power which will enable it to live in and by itself. It is an aspiration which may bring inarticulateness and ineffectuality into the lives of those who embrace it; but such as it is, it is a real thing, an innate impulse of the mind, and the few who elect to live by it are alone fulfilling the conditions of existence at that point of time. Those who do so are the Remnant. They are not unhappy, as the conventional suppose, but happy as those who are in love or fulfilling nature's purposes in any other way. The inheritor of nineteenth century culture seeks in his better moments no further inducement than that questioning impulse which works in his mind, as it worked in the minds of the Stoic inheritors of Greek and Roman culture. This it is with which he shall go forth & conquer. Behind him falls away the latest efflorescence of art and song, but in his seeming rejection of it he carries its seed into the future, the potentiality of new intellectual eras: for here is the paradox of the situation, that with this Remnant, which seems to cut itself adrift from

all progress, the eternal cell of human progress is lodged. Cast off, as it were, from the parent stem, fertilization ensues in the individual mind through that which Plato described as the assimilation of truth: 'What birth is to existence, belief is to truth.' So surely as there is an epoch of utterance, of imagination, of culture, it is followed by one of assimilation, asceticism, belief. Ideas which in the previous epoch have been adequately manifested and expressed in art and criticism begin then to take on the nature and semblance of doctrine, and the terms of religion which relate to a radical change in personality come into force: 'Ye have sown, now you must reap;' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' The impulse of criticism, to see things as in themselves they really are, yields, when satisfied, to contemplation, which aspires to receive into the individual life the irrefragable and immortal quality of ideas themselves.

And yet our doctrine of a Chosen People, for whom the time is come that they should go forth into the wilderness and build the City of God, may appear, to say the least of it, a little crude. It might be thought that the existence of a Chosen People, of a tribe of idealists, in the heart of civilization, is an unmixed advantage for both it and them: that they, on their side, find there material on which to

operate, stuff with which to cope, while, on the other side, the State is continually renovated and quickened through the abode within it of such a tribe. And up to a certain point this is true. The ripening in a nation of the children of light to a Chosen People is the ripening too of that nation. When wisdom and foresight appear in a citizen he inevitably becomes, like Joseph, the adviser of Pharaoh. And literature: what conceivable reason is there for its existence but the elevation of mankind? It is indeed no mean advantage for a State to have a Milton or a Bacon among its citizens. Whatever of grace and of spiritual impulse appears in a State, springs from the abode within it of a Chosen People. Yet there comes a time when the Chosen People and the State, if either are to fulfil the conditions of their existence, must take different ways, when Moses, or in our own time Thoreau, Whitman, Tolstoi, and others, appear, to call them forth to build in the wilderness the City of God. That is the period when the external application of ideas is become impossible, when the progress of the State comes to a standstill, when all development is individual and a Remnant is formed. Come forth, say then these prophets, you that believe or have good hope, ye have sown, now you must reap! Come forth, you that are quickened with that most



ancient and most modern faculty by which men enjoy themselves ! As your strength languishes without toil, so your wills languish without belief ! Come forth and inherit your ideas, & live the great life beneath sun and moon !

In the present case it was less Pharaoh who would not let the Chosen People go than the Chosen People who have wished to remain. For whereas up to this, idealists had followed their proper task mostly for their private gratification and as a paragon, and even that, a little earlier, with one eye on the stake and the torture-chamber, there was now, as one result of the French Revolution, a huge demand created for ideas themselves all the world over. And whereas in Egypt the Chosen People had shown an available dexterity in brick-making, it was now mainly their skill in writing for which a use was found : a facility of theirs which has been found to fit in so well that in the course of the century they have been taking over almost all the literary work which crops up in an advanced stage of civilization. The pen indeed seems to grow to the hand of an idealist, to carry his slender finger like an Arab horseman over the silent plains of foolscap. Take anyone else and set him down to write : he will botch and hesitate where your born literary man, in a trice, will have whipped his thoughts into

their due places, as if really thoughts were the material with which nature had best fitted him to cope. And in an age when facilities count for so much, this facility of the literary man with thoughts has suggested to those powers who control the reins of affairs, the withdrawal of him from tasks which others can do as well as he, brick-making and so on, and special licensing of him, as it were, to work according to his aptitude in thoughts, under wisely concessive supervision: to mould verses and build the lofty rhyme according to his liking. In this capacity, then, of thought-artisans, or, speaking generally, artists and critics, it is that the chosen people have remained within the civil jurisdiction, and gradually swollen to what we have called that curiously situated class of Literary Men, who, in virtue of the dexterity described, and the ever-increasing demand for it, have been advanced from point to point of honour and influence, while remaining as they started a class subservient to alien interests. What though Pharaoh is greater on his throne, has he not said, 'According unto your word shall all my people be ruled?' Thus amid the stress of a ruder and noisier commerce do the idealists ply their trade in the heart of civilization, conforming the methods of their own with those of the other, and forgetting the austere delights of the wilderness in the solace of fine linen and a golden chain.

What is the essential difference between work and slavery? While we belong by our sympathies to a community, not the most menial task set us to the end of the general advantage can be called slavery. When our occupation is a manual drudgery imposed upon us without our consent, that is no doubt a form of slavery, but the mind can rise above it & even turn it to account, as did Epictetus. So long as the body labours for itself and for the mind, that is work. Once the mind consents to labour for the body, that is slavery. And it is the mind whose service conventional life requires — that faculty of original thought, at the centre of each man's nature, which alone utilizes all that the five senses bring him in and which alone makes it worth his while to be alive.

The case, so far as Literary Men are concerned, lies thus. Just as every man is born into the world with a certain amount of capacity for working with his hands, so is a certain capacity for thinking for himself implanted in the mind of each man, which it was the original intention of nature that he should develop. But just as the child of fortunate parents is not threatened with the alternative of manual labour or starvation, so the mind need not nowadays acquire ideas for itself in order to ward off vacuity. For here comes in the function of idealists, to minister intellectual interests in all kinds of ingenious



ways to an unbelieving public: since indeed, under no conditions, must man live by bread alone.

And he who, rather than any other, may be likened to Joseph in Egypt, as having by reason of his prosperity become indirectly the cause of the captivity of his brethren, was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the artist. Not that he was an artist in the elder and absolute sense of the word in which Milton or Michael Angelo were artists, who put themselves, & not their dead selves, into their works; yet in connection with art his name is all-important, as that of one who discovered, at a time when the atmosphere of Europe was unduly charged with ideas, and threatened to enter the life of each man with disastrous consequences to society, the vast capacities of art as an absorbent medium. He was nothing less than the Franklin of idealism, whose discovery withdrew the excess of ideas from the air, and made them, what they had scarcely been before, agents of civilization. Plato, where he defines what he terms belief as being to truth what birth is to existence, indicates an identification on the part of each man with his ideas which has a strange, old-world sound to people like us, who can hold, in virtue of the imaginative reason, all ideas in turn without attaching ourselves to any. In a word, Goethe inaugurated the method of Sainte-Beuve as contrasted

with that of St. Paul. And as Joseph, whatever subsequent miseries were traceable to his prosperity in Egypt, remains to this day one of the glories of Israel, so must Goethe remain for ever one of the glories of idealism. We have ourselves made a pilgrimage to his laboratory in the peacefully laid out old town of Weimar, at that season when the year has rolled back its autumnal mists and fruitfulness and the summer-dried roads are bright with dust under glooming skies: a square and self-sufficient mansion, with posterior gardens, standing back by itself in an open and elevated space. Disturbed only by the presence of a government official (who seemed to feel himself identified with at least Goethe's ideas), we stood in that small sanctum where, morning after morning, those powerful and luminous eyes, directed upon the tablet, drew the great ideas of the world to incarnate themselves thereon before them. Into this quiet little chamber came the restless and swarming ideas which had lately seemed to cloud all the plains of Europe under their wings and minister ecliptic darkness to the performance of evil deeds: they came & were compelled within the magic inclosures of 'Wilhelm Meister,' of 'Faust,' which the master had drawn on his desk. They came to him out of every land & out of every clime, ideas which had dwelt richly in

the Greek mind, which had illuminated the dark faces of Hebrew seers, which had obsessed heretics to their doom. And when his memoirs came to be written and the secrets of his laboratory more or less transpired, it was found that he had used no other magic instrument than that of perfect physical well-being; and if at times the ignobilities incident to life, the breath of the grey east wind, or mere humour remaining over from an indiscretion of diet, dulled its edge, he could yield without any uncouth or pathetic struggle, and acknowledge the elder powers of time and fate. He associated young Schiller with himself as apprentice, or Zaublerlehrling, and the work went forward briskly under their joint partnership: a glorious concern, which made of quiet little Weimar the very chief emporium of ideas in Europe. Out of their mere surplus, the two illustrious partners faced round on their contemporaries & amused themselves, like young men who fling hot pennies to the rabble, with discharging their desirable ideas, in form of epigrams, on people who had none. A glorious time they had of it, tasting here on earth the life of gods. And when at last Goethe died, his worn-out apprentice long since under the sod, insatiate to the last of the common sunlight, and bequeathed his intellectual fortunes to the artists (had he had his will he would



have bequeathed unto them the kingdom of heaven!) it seemed indeed as though, by the establishment in each nation of a community of efficient idealists, the consummations of the promised land would not exclude the generousities of the flesh-pots of Egypt: as though that civilization which had made Goethe chief councillor would surrender its blind hand to the children of light, and suffer art to lead it into those new heavens and new earth of which our own Wordsworth & Shelley had caught a glimpse. But yet a little while, and the flood-tide which had upborne Goethe and Schiller had begun to ebb. Civilization parts off with its own concerns and its own huge problems, and idealists remain where the flood-tide has raised them. Or shall they sink with it? Many will no doubt elect to do so, & become to Goethe and Schiller what Silius Italicus and Statius became to Horace and Vergil, ministering with an ever-dwindling imaginative reason to the requirements of civilization. For the rest, the Remnant, nothing remains but to discover a motive for existence within themselves, to search for the promised land of believers.

As with a thousand articles of small ware, puppets, engravings, pencils & what not, so the best thoughts may still be said to bear the impress, 'made in Germany.' They are made there out of the carcases of

old books, in a way somewhat like that which Vergil divulges for the manufacture of bees. Germany itself remains as passive as a bee-hive to the in- and outgoings of its air-born swarms, which fly humming in large numbers thence into the more honied plains of other lands, and sojourn beneath alien sycamores. If you would know how beautifully pedantry plays into the hands of poetry, go to one of the thought-raising districts of Germany, look down from the neighbouring border of the forest upon a university town, and watch the lights come out at nightfall around the citadel, like spring primroses. At that hour the professors are leaving the libraries each with his day's gleanings put by securely in his note-book: two or three thoughts of the best quality disentangled patiently from tradition and ready for use. Where do they all go to? Well, a child might ask the same question of the constant grimy yield of northern England: his parent only wonders how Newcastle can warm so many hearths. So the wonder here is, how these quiet little places should be equal to the demand of idealists all the world over. The prosperity of England is largely due to its extraordinary supply of coals, and England is called *schmutzig* by Germany, whose national trade leaves it at least cleaner hands. Yet, to a thoughtful mind, the coal-trade of England and

the ideal-trade of Germany excite analogous misgivings. Paradoxes, shreds of reading, and dry sticks fagotted, employed by the Chosen People, at work in each nation, in defect of the aboriginal and plastic idea, begin to suggest some of those shifts to which Israel was reduced in Egypt when it became necessary to produce bricks without straw.

Make haste, therefore, ye Remnant, and begone ! Be assured that the wave which still floats you in prosperity will recede, as it has done again and yet again, so far back into history as our documents afford us a glimpse ! Take your occasion, and be not found in the receding of the wave ! Threatening times are behind, when the State, which now tolerates and caresses you and arrays some of you in fine linen, must remember that, after all, it is the State, and that if it is to deal effectively with difficulties and dangers which, after all, concern itself alone, it must draw itself together and clear of you, and go down, unbroken and resigned, in the great relapse. A Pharaoh will arise who knows you not, and who may resolve to 'deal wisely' with you, with the wisdom, namely, of this world. Let us glance at a time some fourteen hundred years nearer to our own than that night of dismay when Menephthah came hastily to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'Rise up now and get you forth from among my people, both ye and



the children of Israel, and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said !' The wave of progress has lately receded from Attica, leaving it once more the dusty home of the tettix, and is now high in the streets of Rome, flooding with the triumph of life and with the spoils of time and of memory the narrow precinct round which Romulus drove his bullock. Now Rome's hour is come. North and south, east and west, tramp its armies, clashing with nameless nations and emerging beside forlorn seas. Long straight roads, pointed out everywhere through the world, suck up into these seven hills whatever ministers to victorious idleness and Olympian laughter. Ever and again a conqueror returns out of the shadows of the east and leads a train of dazed princes up to the Capitol, and car after car of their spoils: here in a moment, dazzlingly disbursed, they will flash like old wine through the richly-nurtured current of Roman life. And here once again, in these favoured crowds, by these proud conquerors, ideas are acknowledged as a grace, perhaps the crowning grace, of life. Here again, in this hurry to and fro of the fortunate Romans, goes in and out a Chosen People: idealists who place true empire in self-sufficiency and poets who can please even a conqueror's ear with the tale of the transitoriness of civic prosperity. Here a Memmius, driving hard through public & private

life the horses of passion, relents now and then in discourse with his eccentric mutterer of verses, Lucretius. Here when Catullus lets loose, in the name of idealism, a swarm of stinging verses amid the barbaric revels of Julius Cæsar himself, that patrician, instead of nodding to one of his assassins, will send round one of his less sinister clients to the adventurous and lively poet, with an invitation to next day's revels. Here Mæcnas, aloft at every spectacle, and with all Octavian's secrets in his eyes, is not prouder of them than of the name of him whom he maintains in shy woodland solitude, Vergil. Here at the theatre, where Octavian and Octavia have taken their places, and Mæcnas and Agrippa, there is the proud noise of a general uprising when, stout and well-pleased, Horace enters. And why not? Why shall not idealism be exalted with the tide of Roman fortune, and while Rome glitters with all the jewels of the earth, gather to itself all knowledge, all traditions, and the mystic hoards, now disclosed by conquest, of the East? Shall not idealism sit, too, on the Capitol as Rome's ghostly bride? Shall not Vergil and Horace and the Stoics and the Epicureans join with Augustus in leading in the Golden Age? Shall not Vergil, in gratitude for his 'unhonoured leisure,' mingle the shade of Julius Cæsar with those forms which, clad

in whiteness, look from the threshold of Olympus? Shall not Horace waive his republicanism, and, forgetting that melancholy dreamer, Marcus Brutus, salute the god in Augustus? And by-and-bye, when Augustus is an older but still a present deity, but of Vergil & Horace only their names and their works remain, why in truth should not Ovidius Naso, to please the brilliant and agreeable courtiers who numbered him with themselves, write in easy-gli-  
ding elegiacs his 'Ars Amandi?' As a matter of fact, however, this work was felt by old Augustus to fall short of the traditions of Vergil and Horace, and he abruptly ordered Ovid into the wilderness, where, about that moment, an idealist was secretly wandering whose idealism was destined to turn back the numbering of the years & to supplant the idealism of Horace and Vergil far up into the future to the era of Goethe and Schiller. Years pass, not many, and the present divinity of Augustus is exchanged for his divine memory. Idealism is no longer seated on the right hand in council, but cowers under the fierce dominion of a series of madmen. The tradition of Vergil and Horace is indeed not only tolerated but encouraged; but idealism, as the ghostly bride of civilization, must not remonstrate with the whims and extravagances of her lord. There is a Pliny, the shadow of Cicero; a Silius Italicus, the



shadow of Vergil; a Martial, the shadow of Horace. At odd moments of license, too, a more genuine literature of indignation finds vent — ‘*si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.*’ Also there has appeared in the State, lurking in high and low places, a new idealism, the idealism of the wilderness and of the Remnant, an idealism which only concerns the idealist himself and those who, like him, will commit themselves to the doctrine, ‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them’ — there is a Seneca, wavering between the service of God and Mammon, and whose vacillation at length costs him dear; there is an Epictetus, who must pursue his meditations under interruption, while his master is playfully twisting his leg. At length a new Cæsar arises who knows not idealists, Domitian, who in the year 89 A. D., without the intervention of any Moses, acts in a way which recalls, to some extent, the action to which Menephthah was so reluctantly constrained: he drives the idealists out of Rome. Well, Statius and Silius Italicus (who managed, indeed, to remain) no doubt said to themselves, ‘Horace and Vergil were divine poets; why cannot we also be divine, who can read like them the Alexandrians, and themselves also?’ just as we may say now, ‘Goethe and Schiller were gods, and Michael Angelo and Leonardo; why, then, do we

fail of the divine accent and manner, with our wider reach of thought, with our incomparably richer experience?' & we cannot see that, though we have the tongues of men and of angels, no rigour of toil and self-devotion of study will avail to reproduce the bourgeonings of civilization, the art which itself is nature.

And poetry? Ye bards, it is not you will utter lamentation, who desire only a leader, stronger than yourselves, to lead you forth into the wilderness! You will then sing no longer to a critical and moody public a brief, wine-flushed note, but to the memory of races, epics once more, and thronged with heroic forms. Already these forms have swept past you in your hour of vision, and you reached out to them from your environment, but could not attain to them. Great fables revealed themselves unto you in parts, but you were not ready for them and they became a despair to you. They have blessed all your youth with promise, but manhood comes and finds you still waiting, and age is at hand and you have done nothing: you have seen them no more. Every youth is ardent to speak, and thinks himself a great poet. Probably he is right: but most men strike their colours point by point till they have no foot of truth left to call their own. Life has not been to them what they bargained for; civilization has been

too much for them, circumstances over which they had no control. The gods, at least, have not loved them. And at length some dry-eyed poet, glancing sidelong and half in fear at the watching heavens, once so blue and fortunate to his early vision, pens a last blasphemy of them and, leaving his tablets behind him and covering his eyes, hurries down into the way of death.

Here ends *A Selection of Essays and Passages*, written by John Eglinton; selected by William Butler Yeats. Two hundred copies of this book have been printed upon paper made in Ireland, and published by Elizabeth Corbet Yeats at the Dun Emer Press, in the house of Evelyn Gleeson at Dundrum in the County of Dublin, Ireland, finished on the sixteenth day of April, in the year 1905.









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